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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-CHINA-TAIWAN RELATIONS

Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused February 6-12 news coverage on the island's weather and traffic conditions during the six-day Lunar New Year holidays, on the March presidential poll and on the UN referenda. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Taiwan News" urged Washington policymakers to push authoritarian China to respect fundamental values of human rights and democracy and not to suppress Taiwan's UN referenda. An editorial in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" also criticized China's "amoral" foreign business policy and said "China's trade policy and lack of transparency in the arms trade will feed wars in countries all over the world, especially in resource-rich regions in Southeast Asia and Africa." End summary.

A) "U.S. Should Back Democratic Values"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (2/12):

"As the world's leading democratic power, the United States of America should support global efforts to push the authoritarian People's Republic of China to respect fundamental values of human rights and democracy in the world community for both moral and practical reasons. ... In this regard, the meek request made February 7 by U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte urging Beijing that it 'should not try to deprive Taiwan of all of its political space' is grossly weak-kneed compared to his repeated blistering criticisms of the U.N. referendum, which was put on the March 22 ballot not by Chen's fiat but by signatures by 2.72 million citizens or nearly 16 percent of eligible voters in Taiwan.

"The degeneration of the U.S. from defending human rights into a helpmate for Beijing's anti-democratic inquisition is directly related to Washington's decision to reply to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks by launching an illegal war in Iraq and an ill-conceived 'war on terror' through flagrant violations of human rights including torture instead of addressing the roots of the crises which have generated terrorism. For the sake of avoiding 'distractions' from its Iraqi morass, the right-wing Republican administration of U.S. President George W. Bush has taken the PRC's side in pushing to suppress the DPP government for its efforts, including the 'U.N. for Taiwan' referendum, to defend Taiwan's actual existing sovereignty from explicit negation in international organizations, including the U.N. itself, and is putting at risk both the survival of one of Asia's most genuine democracies and the future prospects for the development of democracy in China itself.

"This moral disaster will ultimately turn into a geopolitical debacle. As the PRC is praised by Washington as a 'responsible stake-holder' despite its suppression of democracy at home and support of equally authoritarian allies abroad, other world democratic powers will be encouraged to 'engage' and appease Beijing without any hesitation. ... If Washington policymakers think that the world will be a better place without a democratic Taiwan and

after East and Southeast Asia is turned into a neo-authoritarian theme park under Beijing's management, we sincerely suggest they think again."

B) "Beijing's Deadly Trade Policy"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (2/12):

"... Worrying as this may be, the ongoing military buildup is not China's greatest threat to the international community -- but its amoral foreign business policy is. ... Although partner countries welcome Beijing's policy of not interfering with their internal affairs and not making business conditional on respect for human rights, many fail to see that the practice will hurt international security in the long run. From Sudan to Myanmar, China's indifference to human rights violations in countries that provide it with natural resources has led to grave abuses and fed wars. In Sudan, violence now threatens to spill into neighboring countries and disrupt regional order. ...

"Beyond bad business practice, Beijing's behavior also undermines international efforts to prevent Tehran from successfully developing nuclear weapons. By weakening the effect of the sanctions, Beijing makes it likelier that states like Israel, which feels threatened by the specter of a nuclear Iran, will act preemptively and open a Pandora's Box of conflict in the Persian Gulf, with repercussions on a regional -- and global -- scale. ... This is where the nexus of China's military growth and its irresponsible business policies possibly creates the greatest threat. Led by their domestic military-industrial complex, modernizing military powers begin to produce their own weapons. After a certain period, the military-industrial complex reaches a point where it needs to export weapons to finance its growth and continue to meet the demands of government. There is no reason why China would not go down that path and, in time, become a major arms exporter.

"Left unchecked, China's trade policy and lack of transparency in the arms trade will feed wars in countries all over the world -- especially in resource-rich regions in Southeast Asia and Africa -- that cannot afford to purchase Western weapons or, because of their conduct, are barred from doing so. Non-state groups like al-Qaeda, and conceivably Hezbollah, would also have better access to more modern and deadlier weapons made in China. For the sake of fair trade, international security and the countless lives at stake, the world must unequivocally tell Beijing that powers worthy of respect must act responsibly in every sector."

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